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State Forestry Division Adds a Second “Hotshot” Crew

Salt Lake City, UT – The Alta Handcrew has been certified as a Type 1 or “Hotshot” wildland firefighting crew. As the final step in a four-year process, the 20-person crew underwent its final national review in Ogden two weeks ago. The crew is now called the “Alta Hotshots” making the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands the only state agency in the country sponsoring two Interagency Hotshot Crews (IHC).

Out of 110 IHC crews nationally, five are based in Utah:

- Bonneville Hotshots – Bureau of Land Management
- Logan Hotshots – US Forest Service
- Cedar City Hotshots – US Forest Service
- Lone Peak – Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands
- Alta Hotshots – Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands

Two types of handcrews are used in wildland fire. A type 2 crew is a standard 20-person crew that carries out the tough work of wildland firefighting and are used extensively throughout the country. When terrain, fire behavior and/or remoteness require it, Type 1 or “Hotshot” crews are used.

Nationwide, only two state agencies (Alaska Division of Forestry and Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands) have hotshot programs. Kern County, California and Tucson City also have hotshot programs, but the remaining 105 are managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service or US Forest Service.

The Alta Handcrew got its beginnings from the Utah Fire & Rescue Academy Crew (UFRA Crew) which was an internship program cooperatively run by the State of Utah and Utah Valley University from 2003-2011. The UFRA Crew was highly respected and endeavored to operate in a hotshot-like manner. In 2012, the crew changed its name to the Alta Handcrew and began its peer review process. By 2013, Alta hosted an embedded Hotshot Superintendent to conduct a required operational review during one of the crew’s wildfire assignments. All required national prerequisites were met and Alta received IHC status on June 13th. The crew was assigned on the Cow Hollow Fire in Duchesne County the same day.

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